

# This is an official **CDC HEALTH ADVISORY**

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## **Advisory: Anthrax Case Investigation**

The Florida State Department of Health and the CDC are investigating a case of anthrax in a 63 year old male Florida resident who recently returned from a trip to North Carolina. Testing of the isolate at the state public health laboratory and CDC confirmed the organism to be *Bacillus anthracis*.

This afternoon, the CDC deployed a team of epidemiologists to assist the Florida State Department of Health in their investigation of this case. Additionally, a similar team was deployed to North Carolina to assist with the investigation in that state. Preliminary surveillance has not detected additional persons with similar serious illness in either Florida or North Carolina.

CDC is recommending that all departments of health continue surveillance activities and report any similar cases to the CDC. The initial presenting features of pulmonary anthrax may include fever, malaise, aches and pains; followed by rapid clinical deterioration. Most Level B and C labs are capable of making a laboratory confirmation of the clinical presentation. Please check with your state lab to confirm their ability to perform these tests.

Remember, anthrax is not transmitted person-to-person. Sporadic cases of anthrax do occur in the United States so a single case is not an indication of an outbreak. At this time there is no indication that this is more than an isolated case. Prophylactic antibiotics is not recommended at this time.

Listed below are talking points that you might find helpful in communicating about this issue.

## **Public Health Message Regarding Anthrax Case**

October 4, 2001 Contact: CDC Press Office

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- The Florida State Department of Health and the CDC are investigating a case of anthrax in a 63-year-old male Florida resident. The diagnosis is confirmed by CDC's laboratory. So far this appears to be an isolated case.
- Anthrax is not contagious. The illness is not transmitted person to person.
- Sporadic cases of anthrax do occur in the United States, so a single case is not an indication of an outbreak. The last case of anthrax reported in the United States was earlier this year in Texas.
- The rapid identification of this single case is the result of the heightened level of disease monitoring being done by the public health and medical community. This is the disease monitoring system in action.

- Right now, there is no suggestion of other possible cases, but we are aggressively checking to see if other people are similarly ill.
- The Florida State Health Department and a team from CDC are aggressively investigating the source of infection. They are reconstructing the patient's schedule for the last few weeks to attempt to determine the location where the patient may have been exposed.
- A team of CDC epidemiologists were sent to Florida to look for any indications of exposure to this disease. Medical teams and supplies are prepared to be moved quickly if needed.
- CDC and state health officials are alerting health care providers to look for unusual cases of respiratory disease. Although anthrax starts out with flu-like symptoms, it rapidly progresses to severe illnesses, including pneumonia and meningitis.
- If anyone has been exposed, antibiotics are the appropriate preventive treatment. CDC has an emergency supply of antibiotics readily available for distribution. If the investigation of the cause of this illness indicated that you need antibiotics, your state and local health department will notify you and your physician and will assure you receive the drugs.
- Based on what we know right now, there is no need for people to take any extraordinary actions or steps. They should not go to a doctor or hospital unless they are sick. They should not buy and hoard medicines or antibiotics. They should not buy gas masks.
- The public needs to understand that our public health system is on a heightened sense of alert for any diseases that may come from a biological attack. So we may have more reports of what may appear to be isolated cases. We're going to respond more aggressively to these cases than in the past.

*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protects people's health and safety by preventing and controlling diseases and injuries; enhances health decisions by providing credible information on critical health issues; and promotes healthy living through strong partnerships with local, national and international organizations.*

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**